

867 the gift-giving habit was already established; very often after I
 123 had given them some Japanese flowers a small child would come
 431 tottering up to me with either a live flower or a few bright coloured
 seeds tightly clutched in its hand. Almost the only positive lesson
 [576] in good manners the children are taught is that when elders give them
 a present they must receive it with joined hands; and one day
 Pembu's four-year-old son scolded me severely because I took his
 gift of a cactus blossom in one hand only.

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461 My type-picture of the Lepchas is of a crowd gathered for some
 feast or ceremony. In point of fact this only represents a very
 512 small portion of their lives; but on work-days they are so widely
 scattered as to be invisible and almost unfindable in the open
 country; often for days at a time they are absent from home,
 working in distant fields, and sleeping in the field-house; when
 they do return home in the evening they are usually tired and go
 to sleep fairly shortly after the evening meal.

● 512 The Lepcha working-day starts at cock-crow when everybody
 264 gets up; a substantial cold meal, usually consisting of grain, with
 perhaps some milk and any meat or flavourings which may be
 available is eaten; it is usually accompanied by tea. Then every-
 body goes to their work in the fields or forests, taking with them
 some popped corn or cold cooked rice in their haversack to nibble
 if they feel hungry during the day's work. In the evening towards
 sundown they come home for the second meal of the day. The
 youngest daughter-in-law is meant to do the cooking, under the
 direction of the house-mother, or, if she be too old, of the eldest
 daughter-in-law, who gives out the supplies; but in practice all
 the women present lend a hand. If there are no women free, men
 will do the cooking; but it is considered slightly degrading for
 a house-father to have to prepare his own meal. Each evening
 enough is cooked to serve for that evening and also for the following
 morning.

While the food is being prepared the men may weave mats or
 baskets, or do other odd jobs about the house, or they may sit and
 drink *chi*. Everybody eats the main meal together; the house-
 mother hands out the food, serving the oldest members first; if
 there are young children the fathers will feed the daughters and the
 mothers the sons. After the evening meal there may be a visit either

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to be paid or received ; one or two friends may come in to drink *chi* and everybody will sit around and gossip, or perhaps one will tell one of the long stories which take several evenings to repeat. The younger children can listen to the conversation if they wish to ; if not they can go and amuse themselves ; very little notice is taken of them, and, except possibly for malicious gossip, no subject is avoided because of their presence. A few people own oil lamps, but for the majority the only illumination is the wood-fire. A couple of hours after the evening meal the bedding is brought out of the boxes where it is stored during the day and laid out with the more or less padded wooden pillows at the appropriate places round the walls. People sleep on a cloth, generally quilted, and have another blanket as covering ; Lepchas never sleep with their heads under the bedclothes as they think they would then suffocate.

When the bedding is laid out the fire is damped down with ashes and darkness is presumed to reign ; people undress more or less, according to their personal habits (most adults remove their outer clothes and sleep in their drawers, but some, especially poorer people who have not sufficient coverings, retain the formerly general habit of sleeping naked near the fire) and settle down in their proper sleeping places for the night. Everybody has his own mattress, but married couples share pillows and blankets. The smallest infants sleep in their mother's arms ; but as soon as they are big enough they are given their own bedding, for fear they should wet their parents'. Occasionally a child is placed between husband and wife, but more usually on the far side of the wife. An only or youngest child may sleep beside its parents until it is ten or eleven, but if a younger sibling is born it is placed to sleep either with an elder sibling or some older relation, often a widowed aunt or grandmother. A child usually sleeps in an elder person's arms till about the age of eight, after which, except in the very poorest families, it usually gets its own bedding ; but until marriage unmarried siblings of the same sex usually have their beds laid side by side. Children must always respect their grandparents' bedding, and in the day-time the place where it is laid ; and adults must respect the bedding and sleeping-places of their parents-in-law.

Once the fire is damped down and the bedding laid out people are presumed to be invisible and inaudible ; but this is merely a social convention, and people can and do tell in the greatest detail just what goes on in the night. Occasionally a young man may wait till everybody else is asleep, and then creep out on hands and knees

- 512 to visit a girl with whom he has made an appointment, to return home before dawn; but most people sleep heavily after the day's work.

527 [461] Nine days out of ten this represents the normal Lepcha life, for the Lepchas are extremely hard-working and industrious; though they do not work fast they work steadily and for very long hours. But the monotony of working life is continually broken up by feasts and ceremonies; there are the regular bi-monthly monastery feasts, and in most months there are one or more calendrical lamaist festivals; people are born, or marry, or die, or fall ill, and these are all occasions for feasts for the friends and neighbours of the people affected. There is also a continual current of visits; married women return to their native village, taking with them their children or some relative of their husband's; young men go to visit their *asék'd* bride, accompanied by a friend or relation to help carry the gift; trading partners come on a visit or are visited. All these visits are also occasions for feasts, not so elaborate as the big ceremonial feasts, but a pleasant interruption of everyday routine. The occurrence of feasts varies somewhat with the calendar; they are most frequent in the autumn after the harvests have been gathered and the cardamum sold, and least common in the early summer before the harvest is ripe, when supplies may be running short.

The most regular of all are the bi-monthly monastery feasts, and since, owing to the fact that I was living in the monastery, I was inevitably in the centre of them, it is these gatherings which represent for me the typical Lepcha crowd. At an ordinary feast about eighty or ninety people will be present; occasionally the feast-givers are poor or unpopular and then there are only thirty or forty; and once, when Tafoor was responsible for a bumper feast, there were well over a hundred. About a dozen lamas are seated in the prayer room; six or seven nuns and a considerable number of other women and old men and young children are crowded together on the floor of the small prayer-drum room, the *lla-gong*. Inside the porch, on the right-hand side, is seated the Mandal; next to him is probably Gongyop, as these two are great friends, and the givers of the feast if they are laymen, and strangers and visitors to the village. Outside are probably two cooking places; one to the front of the monastery is fairly small and on it is probably cooking the vegetable 'curry' (*bi*) which is served as a relish to the staple cereal. On the east side there are probably two or three big pots cooking, one

rice as a food. The fact that the offering of sacrifices to the ²⁴¹ deities concerned with farming was preponderantly a woman's concern, leads us to conclude that farming was originally ^[74] the work of the women. In the olden days the fields were burnt out in order to prepare them for the plantation. Part of the forest was burnt, cleaned up, and the cultivation of grain would be carried on for one or two years, after which the tribesmen would move away to another area. This is known as shifting cultivation. Today, the burning of fields is controlled by government, lest too much damage be done ^[636] to the forests. The permanent field system is the common practice today. (Fig. 25-27)

The Rong originally dug up their fields with the use of the hoe, and they did not use the plough. They have taken ^[177] over the plough only recently from the Indians and the Nepalese. The Lepcha's knowledge of farming was very elementary and they could by no means compete with the Indian and Nepalese farmers. There was a reason behind this. The Lepchas were not totally dependent for their existence on ^[222] farming, for the collection of roots and plants, and hunting, ^[224] offered them rich sources of nourishment. A little cattle-breeding goes hand in hand with farming. They keep a ²³¹ few cattle and goats; sheep are kept very seldom, and at the most one or two pigs. The cattle are the mountain Zebu. The humps of these animals are feebly developed, but for the rest they are strong animals. The Zebu are generally of a black colour. The goats are of a poor variety and have no special breed. The pig, which is different in shape from the black Chinese pig, has as its forbear the black Himalayan boar. The stomach of the pig does not hang down low; it has small erect ears, a strong mane of bristles, and a long and pointed head. A Lepcha who is well off keeps about eight to ^[517] ten cattle, and among these are two pairs of oxen for cultivation. The other animals are milk cows and calves. The milk ^[234] provided by these animals is used mainly for tea; but occa- ^[252] sionally butter is made from it. The number of goats reared is also not very large—ranging from ten to fifteen among the richer folk. The cattle and goats are driven to the grassy ^[512] slopes for grazing throughout the day and in the evening they return to their stalls. (Fig. 28)